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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0472  
INFO RUEHAC/AMEMBASSY ASUNCION 6411  
RUEHBU/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES 5130  
RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO 7104  
RUEHSG/AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO 0007  
RUEHRG/AMCONSUL RECIFE 7383  
RUEHRI/AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO 5449  
RUEHSO/AMCONSUL SAO PAULO 1186  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC  
RUEHUB/USINT HAVANA 0048

C O N F I D E N T I A L BRASILIA 002159

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FOR WHA, WHA/BSC, WHA/CUBA

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SUBJECT: BRAZIL: CUBAN BOXERS SAGA LIKELY TO END WITH A WHIMPER

REF: BRASILIA 001715

Classified By: DEPUTY CHIEF OF MISSION PHIL CHICOLA FOR REASONS 1.4 B A  
ND D

¶1. Summary: (C) Federal Deputies will probably unceremoniously drop their investigation into the departure of two Cuban boxers who apparently tried to defect at the Pan Am Games but later were repatriated to Cuba. Unable to gain traction on the issue outside of Congress, and stymied by the Cuban Embassy's refusal to issue them Cuban visas, the Deputies can do little more to ascertain the true circumstances of the boxers' hasty departure from Brazil (reftel). End summary.

¶2. (C) Following news reports that the Cuban Embassy had informed the Brazilian Government it would deny visas to Brazilian deputies interested in visiting the island to meet with the two Cuban boxers, Poloff met with Chairman of the Foreign Relations and National Defense Committee (CREDN) Carlos Eduardo Vieira da Cunha (PDT, Democratic Workers Party, governing coalition; of Rio Grande do Sul) and CREDN member Federal Deputy Raul Jungmann (PPS, Socialist People's Party, opposition; of Pernambuco). Both had pressed the Lula government to account for the Brazilian government's actions in quickly dispatching the two athletes back to Cuba after their supposed change of heart and had claimed they would continue investigating the issue. Both expressed sympathy for the boxers, and indicated they believed the boxers probably did request to return to Cuba, although according to Jungmann, it is highly likely they did so under duress. Neither had any evidence for this, however, and in the absence of any corroborating information or an interview with the two Cuban boxers, there was little else they could do.

¶3. (C) Even though visibly discouraged by the presumed denial of the visa, Jungmann stated he had referred the matter to the Chamber presidency, which approves all travel by members of the Chamber. Jungmann indicated that the institution's honor demanded that a formal petition for a visa had to be made to force the Cuban government to be on record as actually denying the visa request. It was not clear to Jungman, however, whether the Chamber leadership would approve the request.

¶4. (C) Comment: With no new information, no public outcry, and little support beyond some opposition party members,

opposition deputies have little ability to continue to push the investigation or to use the Cuban boxer's saga as a cudgel against the Lula administration. The fact that the Workers Party controlled Chamber leadership in a largely pro-government Congress would refuse to take further action on the issue is not surprising, despite the fact that the trip was formally initiated through a favorable committee vote and specifically couched as intended to investigate the actions of the Government of Brazil. More interesting is that the presumed visa denial did not provoke much institutional consternation in Congress or from the normally prickly foreign ministry.

CHICOLA